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# THE INDYPENDENT

**Issue #75, August 31 – September 14, 2005**

# a FREE paper for free people

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secure, which, for access to information requests, NRC put in a room of information requests, and when Meng, who responded, was also sued. On February 2, 2001, U.S. District Judge Charles Keeler ordered NRC to turn over records relating to the participation in the work of the staff. Under this court order, NRC has produced some 20,000 documents, and a number of the 200,000 pages in the NRC's meetings have been increased and the pages were

A textured, abstract background image with a city skyline silhouette and a person silhouette. The background is a mottled orange and yellow, with dark, silhouetted shapes of buildings and a person's head and shoulders in the foreground. The image has a grainy, layered texture.

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### WHAT IS INDYMEDIA?

With autonomous chapters in more than 120 cities throughout the world, the Independent Media Center is an international network of volunteer media activists.

The IMC seeks to create a new media ethic by providing progressive, in-depth and accurate coverage of issues. We are a community-based organization using media to facilitate political and cultural self-representation. We seek to analyze issues affecting individuals, communities and ecosystems by providing media tools and space to those seeking to communicate. We espouse open dialogue and placing the means of communication and creativity back in the hands of the people, away from the drive of profit.

The *Indy* is funded by benefits, subscriptions, donations, grants and ads from organizations and individuals with similar missions.

### WHAT CAN I DO TO GET INVOLVED?

The IMC has an open door. You can write for *The Indy*, film events and rallies, self-publish articles to the web, take photos or just help us run the office. As an organization relying on volunteer support, we encourage all forms of participation.

The print team reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the entire editorial process.

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**Cover Illustration**  
by Jeff Faerber

# from the newswire: [nyc.indymedia.org](http://nyc.indymedia.org)

## 'Billionaires' Rush to the Aid of Starbucks

Manhattan Billionaires could not sip their lattes idly while Starbucks Corporation faced attacks by pro-union protesters one Saturday in early August. Instead, a bevy of Billionaires recognized our #1 specialty coffee retailer for its outstanding performance in union-busting and its continuing commitment to pay its baristas unlivable wages.

BY SCHULTZ SHILL

To touch off a defiant "sip-in," the Billionaires proffered a toast to "record-breaking profits," while Diva Denz phoned her stockbroker, demanding 1,000 more shares of Starbucks stock. But this celebration was cut short by the arrival of, alas, Starbucks Union picketers! Dr. DeBooks, in a fury not often exhausted by a Billionaire, snatched one of the union's flyers and brought it inside the store. Reading out loud in unutterable indignation, he sounded off the union workers' grievances, including absurd things like livable wages, a decent number of hours, bathroom breaks, and similar claptrap that you might often hear the indentured class complain about.

Thankfully, we Billionaires distributed our own flyers to the customers, as we had our own points to make. Union-busting is "just good business," as we all know. And these unprecedented profits are surely leading to unprecedented pay raises, or at least Chairman Howard Schultz granted himself a 44 percent pay increase while leaving the baristas to their unlivable wages. Moreover, whining workers, if you need full-time status, just work more jobs!



'AND NO MORE BATHROOM BREAKS!' Billionaires stand up to barista union. PHOTO: RYAN SPETH

At this point, the regional district manager appeared at the scene in an outrage over the turn of events. Without missing a beat, Billionaire Monet Oliver D'Place greeted him with our prestigious Better Billionaires Business Bureau Award for Outstanding Unfair Labor Practices, and as the manager blushed, surely from the unexpected honor, the stealthily corrupt Walkin Ondapoorn snapped a camera on his priceless face.

The manager proceeded to escort us out the door, of course,

to suppress the rabble outside. But we Billionaires couldn't leave the comfort of the store without our own security. Indeed, the police arrived at the scene, while Buddy O'Bush, Ivy League-Legacy, and Ivan Yorze donned signs with slogans such as, "We Proudly Screw Starbucks Workers" and "Think Globally, Oppress Locally."

As the union workers rallied behind fired union worker Sarah Bender, we Billionaires chanted, "Sarah Bender, don't defend her, get in there and work the blender!" and

"Starbucks workers, get a clue, living wages aren't for you!"

We then marched in triumph to another crowded Starbucks store, where we were greeted, as usual, with cameras and spectators. Ivy League-Legacy assured everyone that there was nothing to fear, as we had the situation well under control. And lo and behold, we had our police arrive yet again to protect us.

Our bastion of Billionaires was, once again, triumphant. As we well know, "Big money, unit-ed, shall never be defeated!"



## Street Vendors Fight City Hall

The city raised the maximum fine for street vendors to \$1,000 for multiple infractions, from the previous cap of \$250. Protesting the increased fines as incommensurate with most vendors' earnings, the vendors were joined in their City Hall protest by Democratic mayoral candidates.

—Street Vendor Project

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## Cops Arrest 48 Bikers At Monthly Ride

## CRITICAL HARASSMENT

BY AKIRA TANAKA

Police arrested 48 Critical Mass bicyclists at the Aug. 26 ride, marking the highest number of arrests since the Republican National Convention ride one year ago.

Accounts of the total number of cyclists varied since many riders left from different sites around the city, but Bill Dipaola, an event coordinator with the cycling activist collective Times Up! estimated that the number of riders totaled 500.

The latest arrests were part of a recent trend of heavier police presence and more arrests at the monthly rides, whose goal is to raise awareness of bicycling as an alternative means of transportation. At previous rides, police have wandered through pre-ride gathering places warning riders they might be arrested for riding their bikes and passing out literature.

"For the last four months they really haven't announced anything," said Dipaola. He added that, from conversations held with riders before the event, many did not know there was a danger of being arrested.

"The orders are coming from really high up," said Dipaola. "The police on the scene have told us that they don't want to be there."

According to Gideon Oliver, a lawyer representing several arrested Critical Mass riders in criminal and civil cases, ten riders were arrested in June and 33 in July.



**ONE LESS CAR, A LOT MORE COPS:** "The orders are coming from really high up," said Bill Dipaola, from the bike association Times Up! *PHOTO: FRED ASKEW*

"I was extremely disappointed in the police tactics," said Oliver. "The ride was a lot smaller than it has been in the past. The thing is, a lot of us have been doing this for a year now, and it's shocking that the city hasn't come up with a better way to deal with Critical Mass. Someone will eventually get hurt or killed."

One rider, who wished to remain anonymous for legal reasons, said that Union Square South riders left the pre-ride speakout and started south down Broadway. After turning east onto Eighth Street the ride went about two blocks before roughly 20 riders at the rear of the group were penned in by police in SUVs and on scooters.

"The cops ran up with no warning, very quietly, which I guess allowed them to pick off riders at the front and back of the pack for some time," wrote one rider on the

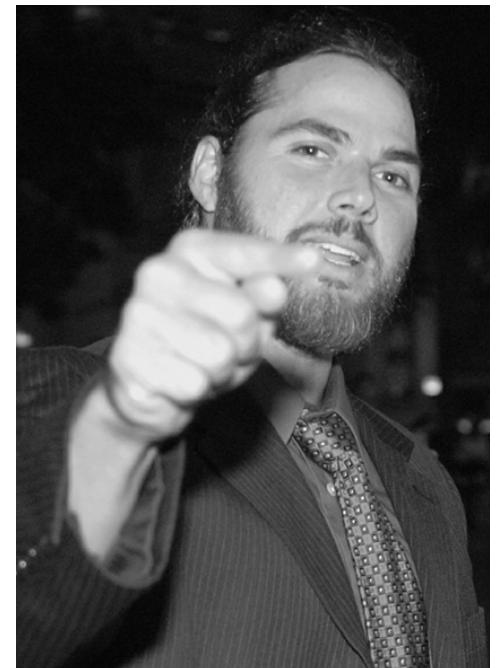
NYC Independent Media Center newswire.

Using arrestee accounts and police information, Oliver estimated that police arrested riders at four to seven different sites along the ride.

Dipaola believes that undercover police in the ride may be acting as agitators and leading riders to locations where arrests can be made more easily.

He added that the increased number of arrests reflected a trend by police of targeting pro-cycling events, noting an intimidating police presence at several of the recent Bike National Convention 2 rides and workshops hosted by Times Up! "It's basically an attack on cycling," he said.

*To send a letter to Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Police Chief Ray Kelly protesting the treatment of cyclists on the Critical Mass ride: [worldcarfree.net](http://worldcarfree.net)*



Geoffrey Blank's trial starts on Sept. 12.

*PHOTO: IAN ASHBY*

## Jail for Speech Geoffrey Blank Faces Time for Union Square Speakouts

BY JAMES KLICKER

Geoffrey Blank, the 31-year-old leader of the No Police State Coalition, faces four years in state prison for charges of resisting arrest, assaulting a police officer, and inciting to riot. The charges – which the Brooklyn native says are trumped up and motivated by objection to his politics – arise from the dozens of times police have made arrests and seized sound equipment to shut down the "speakouts" the small group has been holding in Union Square for three years. Police arrest reports appear to contradict some of the charges; for others, Blank says there are witnesses or videotape that refute police testimony.

The group's public forum carries on a century-long tradition of radical politics in Union Square. Their goal is to defeat the corporate media's "political filter." Blank was driven to the streets by what he sees as a developing "totalitarian state" in the wake of September 11. While two years of speeches have seen Blank's analysis turn increasingly Marxist-Leninist, speakers of all political stripes have grabbed the bullhorn to address the crowd lounging on the steps.

The din of Union Square's traffic drowns out even the most impassioned of pleas a few yards from the speakout, but by New York City law bullhorns still require a permit (although an equally loud boombox playing nearby is just fine.) Just two of the 20 charges Blank faces relate to the use of the bullhorn, but he is representing himself in the Sept. 12 jury trial because "no bar-admitted attorney will challenge the ordinances on constitutional, free-speech grounds."

The child of New York City public school teachers, he participated in the mid-1990s protests against the CUNY tuition hikes. He is still moved when describing his first realization of the power and viciousness of the police at a City Hall demonstration by students – "skulls being smashed, pepper spray, cops pulling their .38s on a protester that tripped up a cop beating someone with a nightstick."

By his continued and visible refusal to back down to the police on his free-speech claims, Blank is trying to set an example of an empowered Left doing more than reinforcing its victim status by focusing on the latest setbacks. Says Blank: "If you want to have freedom of speech, you have to pretend you have it already."

## Subway Searches: 'I'd Rather Walk'

Opposition to subway searches is heating up. Rallies opposing racial profiling and constitutional violations have been held in Harlem and downtown. The New York Civil Liberties Union has filed suit against the city and ad hoc activist groups are taking the Constitution underground. As Frederick Douglass said, "Find out what the people will submit to and you have found out the exact amount of injustice that will be imposed upon them."

— MICHAEL SHENKER & CARY ZACHMANOGLU

### IN THE COURTS

The first hearing of the NYCLU lawsuit against the searches will be held on Wednesday, Sept. 7, at the Federal Court house at 40 Centre Street.

Gather at 9:00 a.m. outside that courthouse for a rally and press conference, then pack the court. The hearing starts at 9:30 a.m. in Room 706.

### IN THE STREETS

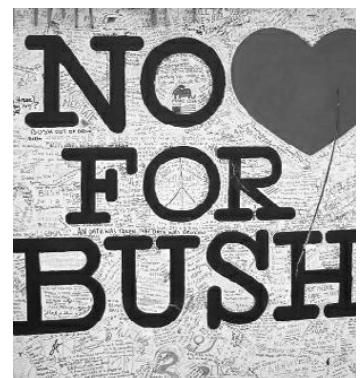
The New York Bill of Rights Defense Campaign is campaigning against the searches. For information on how to join their leafleting at the Staten Island ferry terminal, check: [nycbordc.org](http://nycbordc.org)

The National Lawyers Guild is distributing "I Do Not Consent To Be Searched" pins: [NLG.org](http://NLG.org)

### IN THE SUBWAYS

The No Subway Searches Coalition is going on trains and distributing the I'd Rather Walk Metrocard, with the Fourth Amendment printed on the back.

Riders are urged not to be searched, but to walk to the next stop and enter there. Call (917) 953-5499 for information on how to get involved.



**CAMP CASEY NYC:** With Cindy Sheehan holding it down in Crawford, Texas, New Yorkers set up their solidarity vigil on Aug. 15 at Union Square. A few diehards are camped out 24 hours a day, with crowds gathering in the evening. Spirited debate is constant, with most arguments about how to stop the war. The site's two camp tents were seized and the camp founder "Zool" Sulkovski was arrested and taken away in handcuffs Monday, Aug. 29. *PHOTOS: FRED ASKEW*



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## THE PEOPLE'S LAWYER

# Pataki's Ox Gets Gored

BY ANN SCHNEIDER

New York State First Lady Libby Pataki and her husband were stung by the recent publication of their private conversations in *The New York Post*. The five snippets of conversations that were leaked seemed designed to embarrass the ruling couple and Thomas Doherty, the Governor's appointment secretary and patronage dispenser. Doherty is caught saying to former U.S. Senator Alphonse D'Amato, "Just between you and me, if the fucking commissioners of this state were any slower with this shit, I mean it got to a point where I called [then-Health Commissioner Barbara] DeBuono on something on behalf of [Nassau County Republican boss Joseph] Mondello, and I said to her, 'You know you have a fucking Democrat as your No. 2 person, and you're telling me that I can't get my fucking people hired?'

And then Brad [then-Pataki chief of staff Brad Race] calls me up and says, 'You really can't call these people like that'... I said, 'Brad, does Barbara DeBuono work for us or do we work for her?'... 'Joe Mondello can't get a goddam job, and it still hasn't been done yet.' It's utter bullshit."

Mrs. Pataki, complaining that she doesn't get as many photo opportunities as Donna Giuliani, is heard to say, "It's not that I'm not photogenic."

The tapes were made in 1996 or 1997 and leaked to the *Post* anonymously. The *Post* called the tapes "explosive." Missing the scoop, the *New York Times* yawned, and said "no shocking revelations."

For a governor who has railed against the Fourth Amendment's bar on unwarranted taping as a "technicality," it's lovely to hear him call for a federal investigation of these intercepted conversations.

The law in the state of New York and in most jurisdictions (pre-Patriot Act) makes it illegal to tape a conversation without a court-issued warrant unless one party consents to the recording.

Even where there is no cause to suspect criminal activity, we are all vulnerable to the trust we place in our friends. Not an ideal state of law, but it is well settled. (All involved in the recent releases deny giving consent or being the recorder.)

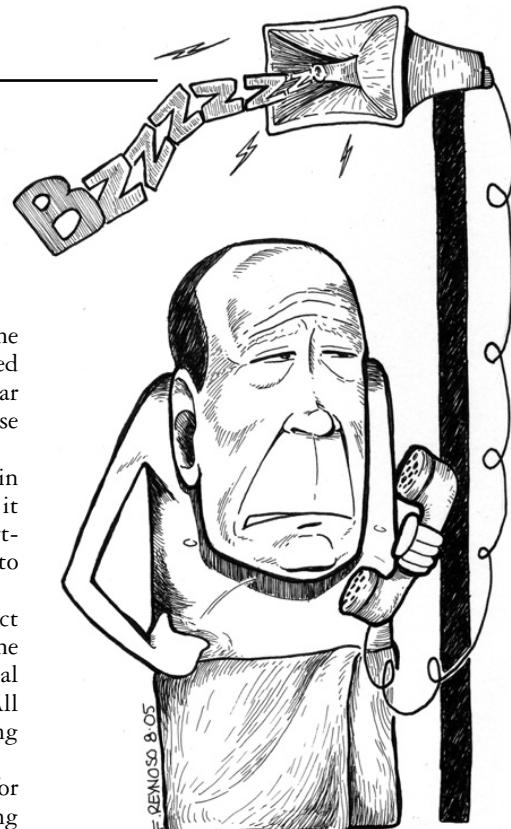
George Pataki has for years advocated for much less restrictive laws on intercepting communications. And 9/11 gave him the opportunity to pass much of his pro-prosecution agenda, rushed into law with great fanfare on September 17, 2001. (By comparison, Congress took three weeks to swallow the Patriot Act.)

But Pataki and his Attorney General Eliot Spitzer didn't get everything they wanted. The strange duo renewed their cry for more enforcement powers later in 2001, headlining their November 1 press release, "Measures to Help Law Enforcement Fight Evil Scourge."

Within the release, the governor says, "The citizens of New York cannot afford to bestow on defendants accused of terrorist acts the windfall of the exclusionary rule if a police officer makes an honest mistake in the recovery of evidence."

What the governor is referring to is an exception to the Fourth Amendment's exclusionary rule. The exclusionary rule prohibits the use of evidence in criminal prosecutions if it has been illegally obtained. The United States Supreme Court has permitted illegally obtained evidence to come into court when the police had a "good faith" belief that they were acting lawfully in intercepting the evidence.

But New York's Court of Appeals, the state's highest court, interprets the state constitution as providing more privacy pro-



tection than the Fourth Amendment. In *People v. Bigelow* (1985), the Court of Appeals rejected the so-called "good faith" exception, reasoning that in accepting the officer's platitudes, "a positive incentive is provided to other [officers] to engage in similar lawless acts in the future." The Court of Appeals recognized that allowing law enforcement officers to claim their intentions were honest, even though they violated the defendant's rights, would completely destroy the exclusionary rule.

Somewhere along the line, our governor must have come into contact with the law, because he was careful to characterize the release of the tapes as "unethical and potentially illegal." He knows that under current state law, if any party to the conversation decided to tape it, even unbeknownst to him, it meets legal standards.

As far as ethics go, his concern seems to be only for himself, as he is willing to subject the rest of us to the "good faith" of his state troopers.

*The People's Lawyer column is a project of the National Lawyers Guild, New York City Chapter. Contact the chapter at [www.nlgnyc.org](http://www.nlgnyc.org) or at (212) 679-6018.*



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#### community media

# Verizon Targets Public Cable

BY LYELL DAVIES

In September the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives will vote on legislation that will determine the future of Public, Educational and Government Television (PEG) in America.

If passed, House Bill H.R. 3146 and Senate Bills S.1349 and S.1504 will transform the American media landscape by allowing the telephone companies to get into the cable television business. In the process, these bills could strip communities across the country of valuable community television channels.

If adopted, the "Broadband Investment and Consumer Choice Act" (S.1504) and other pending legislation would free both telephone and cable companies from considerable regulation, and eliminate public-access TV and the educational and government TV cable stations that currently provide distance learning for youth, networks used by libraries and universities, informational programming and other services.

The Washington-based Alliance for Community Media describes these bills as a "national video

disenfranchisement act," one that will "undo years of progress in connecting the people of our communities to important local institutions and services." Executive Director Anthony Riddle commented, "the loss of franchise agreements would immediately dismantle current community access activities. No more city meetings on TV, local educational programming or public-access TV."

The telephone companies are aggressively lobbying for these bills, as they want to become the sole providers of voice, data, and video service. But they don't want to agree to the same franchise agreements that cable stations have had to negotiate with local governments in the past.

Currently, cable television companies must negotiate a contract with the local community or municipality they serve. These contracts, called franchises, allow cable television providers access to the "public rights and ways" – in other words, the right to run cables beneath publicly owned streets. In return, the cable company must provide channel space for community programming and funding to assist with

the production of this programming.

Riddle estimates that about 5,000 public-access TV stations around the country will be affected by these bills, as well as millions of viewers and approximately 1.2 million people who regularly volunteer at these stations.

If passed, these bills will substantially reduce the number of PEG channels that communities can obtain, strip communities of the funding to operate these channels and prevent communities and municipalities from managing their own "public rights and ways."

Critics also contend that these bills will allow cable and other video delivery companies to "red-line" communities. Entire neighborhoods – ethnic, low-income or ones with a high density of seniors – could be simply "left out" of the communications loop because they are economically disadvantaged and seen as unprofitable.

For more information, go to [www.alliancecm.org](http://www.alliancecm.org) or [mnn.org/saveaccess.html](http://mnn.org/saveaccess.html).

"Have you heard about the Jews? Four thousand of them called in sick the morning of 9/11. Did you hear about the blasts inside the towers? Planes didn't destroy the Towers; the CIA stuck explosives inside and detonated them. A janitor heard bombs go off.

Did you ever wonder why we didn't see plane wreckage at the Pentagon? There was no plane. An ex-military guy said a missile hit it. C'mon, do you really think a bunch of Arabs with box cutters could've pulled all that off?"

Haven't you heard the whispers? In the background, hands cup a tunnel between ear and mouth. A secret map is told to the listener, one that explains the chaos of this world, one that connects random signs into a grand narrative. Yet the secret of conspiracy theories, especially on the left, is that they do not challenge the order of things but plead for its return, thus exposing the latent racism of the left.

Why is this so? Repeating rumors on conspiracy web-sites reinforces a flawed notion of the infallibility of power. When the planes went astray, why didn't Air Force radars pick them up? When the planes were hijacked, why didn't they land by automatic pilot? If the towers were so strong, how could a fire cause their collapse? The questions are less questions than the repeated hope that power can rescue us from random chance and human error.

Contrast this with the image of power in the movie *Airplane*. In it, the heroic couple of a pilotless jet save everyone by inflating a

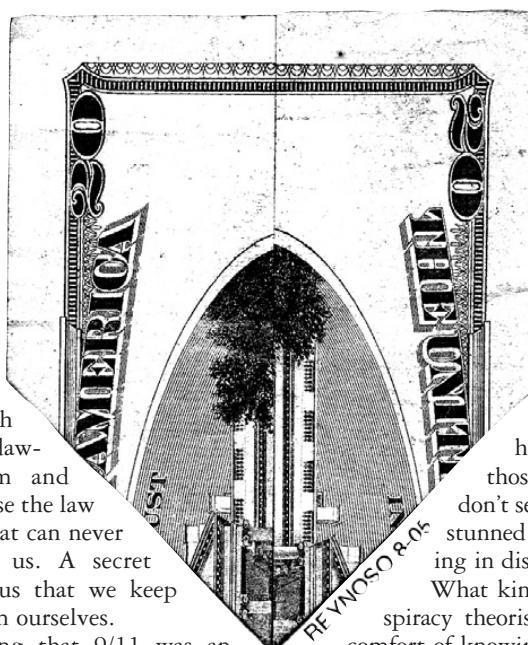
# Behold the Pale White Lie

## Why Conspiracy Theories are Patriotic

BY NICHOLAS POWERS

blow-up doll who lands the plane, while protagonist and girlfriend make out in the cockpit. The doll is the perfect symbol of the dumb blindness of the law, behind whose back the couple enjoy each other. Is this not how we live? On the job or in our love lives, we search for secret times to dawdle and day-dream and cheat. We can because the law is an empty place that can never completely control us. A secret place exists inside us that we keep from others and from ourselves.

So although saying that 9/11 was an inside job sounds like a radical challenge to state power, it actually is a form of reverse patriotism. The accusation calls out of hiding a puppetmaster whose strings are the web we live in. He is seen everywhere because he can't be found anywhere, and his presence must be manufactured to hold off the deeper terror of life's absurdity.



An example of this is the scene in *Fahrenheit 9/11* of President Bush receiving the news of planes hitting the Twin Towers. Often it is read as a member of the Illuminati hearing a well thought-out-plan unfolding. I oppose Bush utterly, but to me he remains a flawed human being, and in those recorded moments I don't see the Illuminati but a stunned and scared man rocking in disbelief.

What kind of patriots are conspiracy theorists? If they want the comfort of knowing someone is in control we should examine the images of that secret control. Often it shows a racist thread, in that whether the conspirators are the Elders of Zion or the CIA or the Freemasons, what is silently assumed is the inability of people of color to be historical agents. Only the superior, if shadowy intelligence of the West can be the cause of change.

Conspiracy theorists forget the lesson at the end of every *Scooby-Doo* episode – that the villain is never a monster but a tired, vindictive, slightly pedophilic-looking man. Once the mask is taken off we see an all-too-human figure. The same was obvious in *The Wizard of Oz*, when Dorothy pulled back the curtains and found a befuddled man moving gears and amplifying his voice.

I remember a friend folding a twenty-dollar bill. "See," he said, "On one side the Pentagon burns and the other," he flipped it, "are the Twin Towers." I wanted to tell him that the only conspiracy here is the conspiracy of the hope that money and power are more real than our freedom to create the world anew.

### MINUTEMAN MILITIA HEADS TO NEW YORK

The anti-immigration militia group known as the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps is trying to expand its "border patrols" to the Northeast. The group first made headlines when it sent teams of vigilantes to patrol the Mexico-Arizona border in April. Now the group wants to expand to the border between Canada and New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. The group's founder Chris Simcox is scheduled to speak on Long Island on Sept. 10. Simcox is the Tombstone, Arizona-based newspaper publisher who issued "A Public Call to Arms" last year. Simcox will speak at the Babylon American Legion Post at 22 Grove Place. *More info at: MinutemanHQ.com*

## new york

### UNDERGROUND RAILROAD STOP IN BROOKLYN

A group of downtown Brooklyn residents are warning that the city is preparing to seize and demolish a row of homes of Duffield and Gold streets that may have once been used as safehouses on the Underground Railroad.

The homes all fall within the boundaries of the Downtown Brooklyn redevelopment plan.

"These seven houses are last of their kind in downtown Brooklyn," writes Lewis Greenstein, who lives at 233 Duffield. "The basements and tunnels should be retained for posterity so it bears witness to that era of America's history where people put their lives on the line to save another human life rather than to enslave them."

Greenstein noted that 227 Duffield was built 158 years ago by the prominent abolitionists Thomas and Harriet Truesdell.

The city has so far claimed that there is no definitive evidence linking the homes to the Underground Railroad. But under mounting pressure, the city is hiring an oral historian to help make a final determination. One historian already hired by the city has suggested the homes were indeed part of the Underground Railroad. After visiting the site in July, A.J. Williams-Myers, professor of black history at SUNY-New Paltz, wrote "I saw what indeed may have been the very secreted, below-ground facilities used by those in search of freedom."

On Aug. 27, protesters assembled outside the Columbia University-affiliated Incarnation Children's Center in Washington Heights, angered by drug trials conducted on HIV-positive juveniles, almost all of whom were black or Latino orphans. The stud-

ies were conducted over a ten-year period. Family members, a staff nurse and other critics note that the National Institute of Health-sponsored studies were conducted on children who were wards of the state, with "no parents to advocate for their best interests.

Federal Judge Richard Berman ruled Aug. 26 that information requested by the NYCLU in their lawsuit against the NYPD's subway searches could not be released on the grounds it might negate the effectiveness of the search program in preventing terrorism. The

decision reversed an earlier ruling by a lower magistrate judge who had ordered the city to release the data. Christopher Dunn, NYCLU associate legal director, stated that they would perform their own audit of the police measure.



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—From the Foreword by Anthony Lappé (*True Lies*)

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### Protesters Tased at Pittsburgh Military Recruitment Office Shut-Down

100 protesters from the Pittsburgh Organizing Group (POG) shut down a military recruiting center on Saturday, Aug. 20. The police then attacked the crowd with pepper spray, dogs, and electric tasers. There were six arrests, and two protesters were hospitalized. One woman was bitten by a police dog and then arrested. POG held another rally on Aug. 27, calling for an end to police violence and an end to the Iraq war.

PHOTO: Pittsburgh Indymedia





DISSENT ON DISPLAY. PHOTO: ANDREWSTERN.NET

## WHERE ARE THE DEMOCRATS?

### Mayor Not Held Responsible for RNC Police Conduct

BY HANSON JONES

The overwhelming majority of protests during the Republican National Convention were peaceful, but the police were not. More than 1,800 people were arrested. Police officers on motor scooters and horseback rode into peaceful groups of protesters. Police officers in riot gear forced their way through crowds as helicopters flew overhead. Police officers with dogs reminiscent of those used at 1960s civil rights protests in the South were seen at numerous locations in lower Manhattan. Plastic netting was used to corral protesters and bystanders alike.

There were many reports of people violently taken down and injured, even though they did not resist arrest. Those arrested were crowded in pens in an abandoned bus garage on the far West Side, and held for hours without food, water or bathroom breaks in a building soaked with used motor oil and other toxic substances. Some of them were denied their medications. Many were held for periods far exceeding the 24 hours allowed by law, despite a judge's order.

In at least one case, police presented doctored videotapes in court as evidence against some protesters, only to back down when other videographers produced evidence that exposed the fabrication.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg's administration has not announced any investigation into who produced the false videotape. The mayor has vocally supported the police tactics and methods used during the RNC.

Why, then, have the mayor and Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly not been held responsible? It has been virtually impossible to find any reporting on who approved those tactics and actions. Why haven't the Democratic candidates for mayor made the violations of civil rights an issue?

We often hear that single-issue voting is unwise. There are some issues that are just plain deal-breakers, however. For me, as a member of a minority group, and as a victim of police and judicial abuse of power, abuse of authority is always a deal-breaker.

## THE NEW RNC LEGAL NUMBERS [as of April 2005]

### Total Arrestees: 1,806

- 408: Dismissed
- 1,069: ACD (Adjourned in Contemplation of Dismissal)
- 27: Acquitted at Trial
- 4: No Charges Filed
- 19: Guilty Pleas to Misdemeanors
- 131: Guilty Pleas to Violations
- 12\*: Found Guilty at Trial
- 93: Open Cases Pending
- 43: Bench Warrants Issued (Missed Court Appearance)
- \* All but one for violations

Compiled by Manhattan District Attorney's Office, National Lawyer's Guild.



COPS, DEMONSTRATORS ASSUME POSITIONS. PHOTOS: FRED ASKEW

## A Missed Opportunity

BY A.K. GUPTA

In the age of the Patriot Act, the RNC protests last summer were undoubtedly historic. The display of massive public dissent was a victory for all participants.

Organizers count as successes that the dissent broke through the media bubble and the fact that small guerrilla-style actions harassed Republican delegates all week.

In terms of changing power relations, however, the protests fell short. It was unlikely that protests alone were going to affect the 2004 election. And while many activists and groups developed healthy working relationships during the RNC, no lasting coalitions came out of a year of intense activity.

Other missteps include the failure to organize a larger direct action capable of disrupting the convention; the side-tracking of the anti-war movement into an anti-Bush movement; and the inability to constructively address tensions over race.

In the summer of 2003, the first meetings occurred for what would become the No RNC Clearinghouse. Present were many former members of the defunct NYC Direct Action Network, one of many groups borne of Seattle. Well-versed in creative direct action tactics, DAN members had the

skills and experience to organize massive actions during the RNC.

Concerned that privileged white activists would dominate the anti-RNC movement, however, the group eschewed all organizing and instead chose to form a "Clearinghouse" where groups could announce, inform and recruit. (Some activists say direct action was also stymied by fears of government repression as well as a debate over whether it was productive to have disruptive actions that would likely be met by a violent police response.)

### DIRECT ACTION

As a result, organizing for a direct action didn't begin until 2004, and the first large-scale meeting took place in July, the month before the convention. Nonetheless, some 5,000 people participated in the "A31" actions, more than many organizers expected.

Afterward, one organizer, Eric Laursen, agreed the actions might have drawn tens of thousands of people – potentially enough to disrupt the convention and make a national impact – if organizing had begun the previous summer. The energy was there. What was lacking was the organizing.

In addition, the Ruckus Society passed on its usual role of holding a training camp in direct-action tactics before a major mobilization, further blunting momentum toward a large-

scale action.

The Clearinghouse also limited its appeal by relying on jargon-laden, consensus-based meetings. One RNC protest organizer, Jennifer Flynn, said activists with Still We Rise who attended Clearinghouse meetings "often felt uncomfortable with the structure and process."

Still We Rise, a coalition of people of color led local groups that spent months planning RNC protests, was one of the few groups concretely linking local issues to anti-RNC organizing – but it was bypassed by most white activists.

People of color were active in organizing, staging a rally in Harlem and two separate "Poor People's Marches," one of which drew 20,000, the other about 5,000. At the United for Peace and Justice demonstration on Aug. 29, however, turnout among people of color was spotty.

There were many ideas on how to broaden participation – "consultas" throughout the major boroughs, door-knocking campaigns, rotating meetings around the city, a listening tour – but most outreach was limited to leafleting and a "come join us" approach.

Even though New Yorkers were overwhelmingly supportive of protests, they weren't engaged in a lasting way. One organizer says all the groups –

"United for Peace and Justice, the NoRNC Coalition, etc. – [failed] to hook up with local activists in a number of areas," such as the stadium and gentrification battles.

During the homestretch, the Clearinghouse held open houses at St. Marks Church where different groups set up tables to enlist new recruits. But the outreach turned into "inreach" activist networking events because so few new people showed up.

### WHITE GUILT

Weeks before the RNC there was an attempt to strengthen links between white activists and people of color. The concern of white activists dominating was (and is) very real. Issues around race are frequent stumbling blocks for the left.

Still We Rise, a coalition of people of color led local groups that spent months planning RNC protests, was one of the few groups concretely linking local issues to anti-RNC organizing – but it was bypassed by most white activists.

A retreat was held in upstate New York under the banner "Uniting New York" that brought together about 75 key organizers. Instead of working on building a real radical, multi-racial network, the retreat devolved into a "white people need to confront their racism" workshop after a trivial comment made out of ignorance.

This stemmed from a tendency within identity politics that says while whites can try to address their own racism, they will always have white-skin privilege so they must defer to people of color. Such an approach turns dialogue into a one-way transmission between the enlightened and the benighted. It also saddles people with an overwhelming sense of guilt, while successful movements improve people's sense of self-worth.

For UFPJ, the RNC didn't succeed in either building the anti-war move-

ment or having a meaningful impact on the election. By the second anniversary of the Iraq war this March 19, protests had dwindled to 5,000 in Central Park (organized by the Troops Out Now Coalition), while UFPJ could only muster one busload from all of New York City for protests in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

Most people who attended the huge UFPJ march on Aug. 29 showed up to protest Bush. UFPJ is a coalition of more than 1,300 groups, but with few staff members it has a limited capacity to create protests. It is best at shaping mass political outbursts into a specific event, as demonstrated by Feb. 15, 2003, the RNC and the upcoming mobilization in D.C.

UFPJ's raison d'être is to end the Iraq war, but it chose to frame the RNC protest as "We Say No to the Bush Agenda." One of their organizers, Hany Khalil, said they were hoping for a large turnout among organized labor and liberals and to use that momentum to build a broader anti-war movement.

But organized labor, MoveOn and other Democratic Party stalwarts refused to take an anti-war stance so as to cover for pro-war John Kerry. If UFPJ chose to focus on the Iraq war, protests would have been smaller – there were many other multi-issue demonstrations – but they could have focused on building an anti-war movement whoever won. (In terms of numbers, an anti-war demonstration on March 19, 2004, drew 100,000 in New York City alone.)

For UFPJ, the RNC didn't succeed in either building the anti-war move-

BY LUZ SCHREIBER

The RNC protests were animated with creative art that resembled the carnival atmosphere of the anti-corporate globalization protests during the late '90s. The festive atmosphere contrasted sharply with the overwhelming police presence during the convention.

The streets were filled with dozens of cardboard peace doves, witty signs and handmade posters. Each day there was something interesting and different happening that captured people's and the

## A Hundred Flowers Bloom

media's attention. It was inspiring to participate in a protest that coupled creativity with sharp political criticism.

Political art can be the most personal and effective forms of public protest because people are drawn toward appealing colors, shapes and sounds. Theatrical and cultural protests engage audiences demanding a response. And actions utilizing shock value never fail to attract people's eyes.

Activists organized by ACT UP blocked traffic around Madison Square Garden. They shed their clothes to reveal hand-painted signs on their bodies that read "Drop the Debt" and "Stop AIDS," demanding a real solution to the AIDS pandemic in Africa. It caused strong reactions.

tions from bystanders and enough commotion so that several corporate media outlets covered them and it was talked about long after it happened.

Humor is very powerful tool, and the Billionaires for Bush know it. Mocking war profiteers, they dressed up as wealthy socialites who declared their support for Bush with signs such as "4 More Wars."

Some art forms draw immediate compassion and sympathy from witnesses. One theater group dressed up as mothers, somberly carrying their dead sons, with others tolling a bell. It evoked a hushed response in the crowd.

The Subjective Theater Company staged *The White Plague* at the "unconventional theater festival." Written in 1936 by Czech author Karel Capek, the play uses Adolf Hitler's language – which bears an eerie resemblance to the rhetoric Bush used to entice people to support the war in Iraq. "We want to marry the world of art and politics," said director Zach Mannheimer.

Creating art means that you have delved into your imagination to make something different. Expressing your emotions or opinions in ways other than with words can have a universal appeal. Making political art threads together different parts of your imagination to understand an issue and propose an alternative. Creating art and beauty is expressing what we envision in the future; it is a welcome alternative to a discourse of fear, hatred and destruction. It allows us to dream and hope for a possible future.



AUGUST 29, 2004. United for Peace and Justice march. PHOTO: ANDREWSTERN.NET

Agreeing that the RNC was a cynical ploy to exploit Sept. 11, we felt that we could help promote a large turnout through our reporting. But we weren't critical enough of the organizing as it was happening, asking consistently what were the goals, what was the strategy and how groups were responding to the political context.

While it's unfair to call the protests a failure, they didn't live up to their potential. Clear lessons include the need to actively link larger battles to

local issues and thereby elevate organic leadership.

There was also tremendous pressure to fall into the "Anybody But Bush" camp. This meant most groups failed to vigorously protest Kerry's pro-war stance or held back on a direct action because the chaos might benefit Bush.

Maybe the most important lesson is that a dramatic event can only be achieved through creative, resourceful and well-thought-out risk-taking, too little of which occurred last summer.

# National briefs

## FBI LINKS NON-VIOLENT ACTIVISTS WITH TERRORISM

The ACLU made public FBI documents that list three Michigan-based activist organizations as potential terrorist threats. The East Lansing Animal Rights Movement, the anti-war group Direct Action and By Any Means Necessary, an affirmative action defense group, are all under government surveillance despite no history of violent activity. The FBI has fought the release of materials related to the monitoring of dissident groups.

Michigan ACLU Executive Director Kary Moss says the documents show the FBI and other law enforcement groups pose a "threat to legitimate dissent."

## ABORTION ACCESS RESTRICTED AT STATE LEVEL

According to the *Washington Post*, state legislatures around the country have passed the most sweeping abortion restrictions since 1999. Governors in states including West Virginia, Florida and Maryland have signed measures recognizing fetuses as distinct victims of homicide, attempting to establish personhood. An outright ban is under consideration in South Dakota. Anti-abortion activists are pursuing a two-pronged approach: reduce the number of abortions immediately through restrictions, and establish legal precedents to get the high court to reverse the landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion.

## 2004: CRAPPY YEAR FOR AMERICAN POOR

Gas breaking \$3 a gallon is the least of it. The number of poor Americans rose by 1.1 million last year, with 37 million now below the federal poverty line. The Census Bureau's count of medically uninsured people rose for the fourth straight year, jumping to 45.8 million in 2004. Adding insult to injury, the titans of big business are raking it in. According to a study co-authored by the Institute for Policy Studies and United for a Fair Economy, for every dollar a worker earns the average CEO now makes \$431 — \$11.8 million annually to the worker's \$27,460. Leading the pack, Citigroup's CEO Sandy Weill has taken home over \$1.1 billion in pay since 1990.

**Charges were dropped against the "raging grannies of Tuscon" for trying to enlist at a military recruitment center in July. Ranging in age from 65 to 81, the elderly women asked to go to Iraq instead of their children and grandchildren.**

**Defying Utah's** reputation as one of the most conservative states in the country, 2,500 locals joined Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson to protest George W. Bush's local appearance at a convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

**Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez** announced plans to help poor Americans with cheap gas. Chavez said that Venezuela could supply gas at "half the rate" if intermediaries who "speculated and exploited consumers" were cut out. No mention was made of how he would actually do this, though Venezuela owns Citgo and already provides 40 percent discounts to island nations throughout the Caribbean.

**George W. Bush has entered the ranks of the most unpopular presidents in history.** The Gallup opinion poll puts his "disapproval rate" at a soaring 56 percent. At the height of the Watergate scandal, Nixon hit 66 percent. On the flipside, Republican partisans give him 90 percent approval rating.

**Thousands of striking airline workers** and their supporters rallied in Minnesota. On strike since Aug. 19, the Northwest Airlines mechanics, cleaners and custodians walked out in response to a proposed layoff of more than half of their union mechanics, and a 25 percent wage cut for the remaining workers.

**Many of the tens of thousands of New Orleans residents** who sought shelter in the Superdome were subject to weapon searches in the rain. As the storm intensified, the searches moved inside the Dome. People carried their belongings from furniture to televisions while the sick and elderly lined the hallways.



Protest against the wall, Bil'in *PHOTO: NYC.INDYMEDIA.ORG*

## THE DECEPTION IN GAZA

BY JENKA SODERBERG

The American, Israeli and even some Palestinian media have been praising Israel's "move toward peace" with their plan of "disengagement" from the Gaza Strip. Look a bit more closely, however, and you will see that disengagement is in fact a distraction; a magician's trick to keep the world looking at one hand while a coin disappears from the other.

In this case, the coin is the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the other part of the occupied Palestinian territories where withdrawal is not taking place. Under the disengagement plan, there are approximately 6,000 Israeli settlers being removed from the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, a much greater number of settlers — over 200,000 Israeli citizens — are not "disengaging," they are digging in the Palestinian West Bank.

The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated in 2002 that "the present National Unity Government, under Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, has officially declared that it will not build any new settlements." But on March 21, Israel approved plans to build 3,500 new housing units between the Jewish settlement of Ma'ale Adumim and Jerusalem. And in 2005 alone, over 9,000 additional settlers have moved to the West Bank. Currently under construction, the new units

will consolidate Israel's control over East Jerusalem and divide the West Bank in half.

Since January, the Israeli government has issued nearly 200 tenders for new settlements in the Palestinian West Bank. According to a 2004 report by the Israeli group Peace Now, approximately 51 new outposts were established between March 2001 and November 2004. Altogether, approximately 100 new settlements have been established since 1996 in the West Bank. All of these additions, as with every single settler camp, are illegal under international law.

But there is another reason to doubt Israel's latest gesture: the Jerusalem section of the wall that Israel is building through the West Bank.

Under U.N. pressure, the Israeli government announced a slightly revised wall route in February, annexing roughly 10 percent of the West Bank and leaving 240,000

Palestinians trapped within the confines of the wall's checkpoints and watch towers. The new route leaves most of the wall deep inside the northern and central West Bank, while making only minor changes in Jerusalem area.

Withdrawing from Gaza is merely a tactical sacrifice that Israel must make to gain its strategic goal of de facto annexation of the West Bank.

"The disengagement is actually formaldehyde," said Dov Weisglass, an advisor to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. "It supplies the amount of formaldehyde that's necessary so that there will not be a political process with the Palestinians," which enables Israel "to park conveniently in an interim situation that distances us as far as possible from political pressure."

While the world focuses on the magician's left hand, where a few thousand settlers are moved from the Gaza Strip, the right hand is building walls around towns and villages, expanding settlements and maintaining hundreds of military checkpoints in every part of the West Bank.

### A PRISON CALLED 'GAZA'

The relocation of Israeli settlers will leave unchanged the desperate conditions of the Palestinians living in Gaza.

The Gaza Strip is the most crowded place on earth. Under Israeli occupation, unemployment has reached levels near 90 percent in many areas. Israeli imposed malnutrition afflicts 40 percent of the children, and disease is rampant in the crowded refugee camps.

The Israeli military will maintain control over the shoreline, regulating all shipping, and the fences that currently encircle Gaza. On Gaza's border with Egypt, the Israeli military has already been constructing a trench several hundred meters wide, demolishing hundreds of homes in the southern part of the Rafah refugee camp.

No jobs will be available to the Palestinians, many of whom comprised a cheap labor pool. They have now been replaced by Thai and other east Asian immigrants, and very little agricultural space is available.

The Gaza Strip, completely separated from the West Bank, will continue to be the world's largest prison. The Israeli military has guardposts throughout the territory, and will not remove these when disengagement is through. From these guardposts and military bases, hundreds of children have been killed in their neighborhoods, playgrounds and even inside their homes by soldiers firing randomly or taking pot-shots for fun.

As Palestinian journalist Laila al-Haddad stated in a recent *Washington Post* article: "The Gaza disengagement will simply restructure Israel's occupation. Instead of controlling our lives from within, Israel will control Gaza from without."

## THE REAL REASONS FOR 'DISENGAGEMENT'

According to Israeli peace activists Yehudit Harel and Yaakov Manor, it is extremely unlikely that the withdrawal from Gaza will lead to a future withdrawal from the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Harel and Manor state the real motives:

- 1) To improve Israeli positions and shorten the border, i.e., a tactical military redeployment.
- 2) To weaken international pressure, and to obtain an international green light for the perpetuation of Israeli control of the settlements blocs, and the lands which are on western side of the West Bank wall.
- 3) To strengthen among the Israeli public the idea that there is "no partner for peace."
- 4) To make a joke of the Palestinian Authority's institutions.
- 5) To create a trauma among the Israeli public, by pretending that the redeployment from Gaza is the maximum of compromise possible with the Palestinians, and that any additional compromise will provoke a terrible civil war.
- 6) To continue the construction of the wall and settlements in the West Bank.

These are clearly stated objectives of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and the Israeli National Unity Government. Ariel Sharon was the general under whose watch occurred the massacre of hundreds of civilians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps during the war against Lebanon in the 1980s; a man who just this past December stated in a speech that Israeli settlers must "take the hills, and then the rest," is not a man who desires peace with the Palestinians.

# SYRIA HITS BACK IN LEBANON

BY BILAL EL-AMINE

BEIRUT, LEBANON—The first order of business for Lebanon's new prime minister, Fouad Siniora, after winning a parliamentary vote of confidence was a visit to the Syrian capital of Damascus. Siniora was a lifelong friend and confidant of former Prime Minister Rafiq Harriri, who most believe was assassinated by the Syrian military, an act that precipitated their hasty withdrawal from Lebanon.

For weeks after the assassination, Syria was subjected to a storm of criticism in the Lebanese and international media. Some 30 Syrian workers were lynched, many more were attacked, and thousands fled their homes in fear.

Just as Siniora was forming his government and drawing up its manifesto, Syria decided it was time to hit back. Syria virtually shut down its border with Lebanon and the only land routes for commercial trade from Beirut through Syria to Iraq, Jordan, and the Persian Gulf.

According to some estimates Lebanon was losing \$300,000 a day with no easy alternatives — going through Israel was not an option. Then, in an unprecedented move, the Syrian authorities detained several Lebanese fishermen who crossed into Syrian waters, and publicly demanded compensation for the families of Syrian workers murdered in Lebanon.

This had a sobering effect across Lebanon's political establishment — in a few deft moves, the Syrian Baathist regime

reminded them of their country's strategic importance to Lebanon's economic, if not political, well-being.

The new government in Beirut got the point fast. Its manifesto made mending Lebanon's "unique" relations with Syria its top priority.

Crucially, the ministers declared that they would not allow the country to be used as a conduit for anyone (i.e., the United States) intending to harm Syria. And before long, Siniora was boarding a plane to Damascus.

Few could have predicted Syria's lightning comeback — just as many were writing it off, it boldly reasserted itself as a regional player. The Arab nationalist Baath regime in Damascus, now passed from father Hafez Al-Asad to son Bashar, was determined not to be cornered and given the "Iraq treatment" by the United States.

Syria's rulers carefully managed the loss of Lebanon and seem to have absorbed the ensuing aftershocks with minimal damage to the regime's standing at home. Ordinary Syrians, far from rebelling, have largely stood by their government throughout the crisis. (Interestingly, one Syrian dissident attributes this popular support to the wave of chauvinism against Syrian workers in Lebanon after the assassination.)

But this is not the end of the story; undoubtedly, Washington will respond.

The first opportunity will present itself when the U.N. committee investigating the assassination of Harriri files its final report in the coming weeks. If it points the finger at

elements in the Syrian government as has been rumored, the U.S. campaign against Syria will get hot again very quickly, particularly on the Lebanese front.

And even though many Lebanese want to know who killed Harriri, they are getting jittery as the deadline approaches, fearing the outcome may tear the country apart, or spark a confrontation with Syria that Lebanon would probably lose.

The Bush administration has been gradually raising its stake in the new Lebanon: politically through its very busy ambassador and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's recent visit, economically by offering all forms of aid and assistance to ease the country's gigantic debt, and now militarily by working closely with the Lebanese armed forces.

There are already plans afoot to move the U.S. embassy (now outside Beirut) closer to Yarzeh, the same town that the Lebanese ministry of defense calls home. And the Pentagon is conducting joint exercises with their Lebanese counterparts, offering the army further training in the U.S. and new weapons.

Given all this, it is understandable why Lebanese are becoming increasingly pessimistic about the future. Many fear that continued foreign meddling in a divided and conflict-prone country like Lebanon could usher in another civil war. Washington's performance in Iraq certainly does not reassure anyone here that the deepening U.S. involvement in Lebanese affairs will stave off such a disaster.

## World briefs

### REBELLIONS AND GENERAL STRIKE IN IRANIAN KURDISTAN

In late July and early August, the Kurdish province in Iran of West Azerbaijan was shaken by demonstrations sparked by the killing of Kamal Asfrim, leader of the boycott of the presidential election last May. After security services returned Asfrim's body to his family bearing torture marks, word quickly spread. Shops in the provincial capital were closed in protest and slogans such as, "Death to the Islamic Republic of Iran," appeared throughout the Kurdish districts. At least one soldier was killed.

The government responded with 400 arrests, half of them women. A general strike was called Aug. 7 demanding an end to martial law, identification of Asfrim's killers and basic political rights for Kurds. Instability in Iranian Kurdistan helped precipitate the revolution of 1979.

### IMPEACHMENT OF PHILIPPINE PRESIDENT STALLS

Despite being caught red-handed in electoral fraud during her 2004 election, Philippine president Gloria Arroyo has dodged impeachment by the Congress.

"For all intents and purposes, it's dead," said Jose de Venecia, the speaker of the House and a supporter of Arroyo.

Opposition leaders are expected to renew street protests, but members of the national elite have closed ranks behind the embattled president, and few forecast a reprise of the "People's Power" protests that pushed former-dictator Ferdinand Marcos from power in 1986.

### ANTI-CASTRO BOMBER COULD GO TO VENEZUELA FOR TRIAL

Luis Posada Carriles, wanted in Venezuela for bombing a Cubana airliner in 1976 that killed all 73 passengers, could face extradition to Venezuela if he is found to have entered the United States illegally, said Judge William Abbot, who is presiding over his case. Posada was arrested in May after appearing in Miami, and is seeking political asylum in the United States.

Trained by the CIA for the failed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961, Posada went on to claim credit for the 1997 bombing of two tourist hotels in Havana, and, in 2000, was convicted of planning to assassinate Fidel Castro during a regional summit.



BRIAN LIGHTBODY

### 'intractable' problems

## U.S. Blocks U.N. Reform, Efforts Near Collapse

BY DONALD PANETH

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y.—At the United Nations, one can consider all the environmental, political, social and economic dilemmas of the world. It is a dispiriting endeavor, in the late summer of 2005, as the U.N.'s 191 member states prepare to meet both at its 60th annual General Assembly and in a high-level summit of heads of state, premiers and foreign ministers.

Prospects for significant action are not encouraging. Nothing is likely to be achieved at either meeting.

Three drafts of the summit's "outcome document" have already been written. The third draft contains such assertions as "We recognize that climate change is a serious and long-term challenge" and "We emphasize that progress in disarmament and non-proliferation is essential" and "We reaffirm our commitment to strengthen the United Nations."

No new ideas or proposals are presented in the 39-page document, which recycles a lot of material from the past 25 years of similar documents.

Despite the draft's harmlessness, U.S. demands it either be dismembered or replaced with a short statement were reported in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Financial Times* during the week of Aug. 22.

The summit will be held Sept. 14-16. On Sept. 17, the General Assembly will convene.

As usual, the Assembly and its committees will take up every problem under the sun. Its provisional agenda lists 155 items, many with subsections. Item 98, general and complete disarmament, has the most subsections at 30 — from notification of nuclear tests to problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has often spoken and submitted reports this year on the urgent need to reform the Security Council and to meet "Millennium Development Goals" by 2015.

China and the United States have already declared that they will not support changes in the Council.

The Millennium Goals include the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, universal primary education, the promotion of gender equality, reduction of child mortality, improvement of maternal health and implementing environmental sustainability.

Those goals will not be met. Neither the political will nor the money to carry them out exist.

But everybody will go on talking about them.

Harvard University Professor John Holdren explored the climate problem at the United Nations last May 10. Said Holdren, "the problem of global climate by human-produced greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is coming to be understood as the most dangerous and intractable of all the environmental problems caused by human activity."

He continued, "the problem is highly intractable because the dominant cause of the disruption — CO<sub>2</sub> emission from fossil-fuel combustion — arises from the process that currently supplies 80 percent of civilization's energy. The technologies involved represent a huge capital investment (\$12 trillion worldwide)."

Major change must start now, he said. But, as is well-known, the Bush administration won't move on it, and as a result, effective world action is blocked.

Feeding the hungry, malnourished and undernourished is another intractable problem, though more susceptible to solution. A U.N. report published Aug. 25 on the world social situation stated without reservation, "There is more than enough food in the world for all its inhabitants, and low-cost food supplies are produced in quantities sufficient to meet the needs of the growing global population, if food were distributed equitably around the world."

Instead, the number of food emergencies has increased from an average of 15 per year during the 1980s to more than 30 per year since 2000, the report said.

Malnutrition affects around 852 million people worldwide. It accounts for about half of the 10.4 million child deaths occurring annually in the developing world.

Which nations and what mechanisms block the equitable distribution of food around the world?

So it goes with every question that the General Assembly will take up — and fail to act on.

**Four 500-pound bombs** dropped by the Marines in Western Iraq killed 56 civilians. The U.S. military claimed to have killed seven militants, denying it targets civilians.

**The southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh** has banned the recently formed Communist Party of India (Maoist) and seven mass organizations.

Police arrested well-known poet Varvara Rao, a member of one of those organizations, the revolutionary writers association Virasam.

**Subcomandante Marcos** appeared for the first time in four years in an Ocosingo meeting of the Zapatistas with activist groups from across Mexico. Marcos declared that the Zapatistas will endorse no candidates in the upcoming presidential, singling out the center-left candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador for special ridicule.

**War on Terror costs more than World War I**, say analysts from the Harvard University school of government. At an estimated cost of almost \$900 per American, including hidden expenses such as veteran's benefits, it will have cost \$252 billion by the end of September.

**Pakistan's Supreme Court** ruled that students from unregistered Islamic schools are ineligible to stand in elections. Hundreds of fundamentalists elected in August face disqualification.

**A major international conference "in support of the Iraqi resistance"** will be held in Italy on October 1. Attendees will include former Baathists and Islamists, as well as significant figures from the socialist left. Forty-four U.S. congressmen sent a letter to the Italian government denouncing the conference.

A Cinema Libre Studio release

"There's a stunning revelation in almost every scene.  
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DAVID STERRITT, CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

"Comprehensive and chilling..."

JASON SILVERMAN, WIRED NEWS

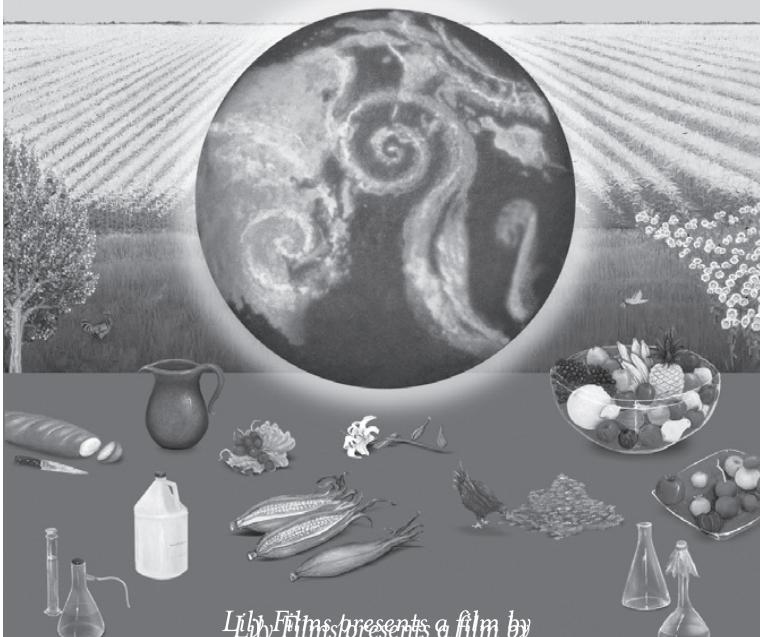
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## reviews

# A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF HIP-HOP

BY KAZEMBE BALAGUN

Jeff Chang has the good sense to understand that political movements move forward by looking backwards. Perhaps that's why *Can't Stop, Won't Stop* feels like an intervention as much as a history of rap music. By insisting that "generations are fictions" Chang is challenging the new school not to accept the boundaries set by pop culture and sociologists. "Whom does it include?" Chang writes of the hip-hop generation: "Anyone who is down. When does it end? When the next generation tells us it's over."

This is a bold statement that cuts to the heart of the current orthodoxy of "keeping it real." For Chang, hip-hop has always been a balancing act, a particularly African-American art

**Can't Stop, Won't Stop:  
A History of  
the Hip-Hop Generation**  
By Jeff Chang  
St. Martin's Press, 2005

form that has borrowed heavily from world culture; a music that can move the crowd and recreate community, at the same time priding itself on fragmentation over staccato beats. "Hip-hop generation brings together time and race, place and

polyculturalism, hot beats and hybridity," Chang writes in his opening salvo; for him hip-hop is the soundtrack of globalization.

Then it's no wonder that he locates hip-hop's start at the beginning of the neoliberal period of the mid-1970s. Then, the empire struck back at popular movements through austerity measures on Third World countries and urban budget cuts at home. The flight of jobs to the suburbs, along with a disappearing social safety net, turned large sections of American cities into bantustans. From Los

Angeles to the South Bronx, a new generation faced a crack epidemic, AIDS and massive unemployment.

But nature abhors a vacuum; Chang documents the growth of street organizations as political vehicles, from the earlier alliances of Bronx street gangs and the Young Lords to the early peace treaties between Bloods and Crips after the 1992 Los Angeles rebellion. These examples of politics from below (even outside the purview of the traditional left) give hip-hop its early urgency and hopes that it would create a new revolutionary movement. Still, a critical tension remains between art and politics.

Media critic Bill Stephney put it best: "Woe be it unto a community that has to rely on rappers for political leadership," he said. "Now that our community leaders cannot take up their responsibility, you're gonna leave it up to an

*continued on facing page*

## 'Heartcheck' for the Movement

BY BRENDAN STORY

The phrase "heartcheck" is prison slang to call someone out when you grow weary of him running his mouth. For example, if a person is wronged by another and he talks endlessly about getting him back, but does nothing but talk and whine — "Heartcheck!" Do it or shut the fuck up.

Jeffrey "Free" Luers and Rob "los Ricos" Thaxton have written a heartcheck for those who identify with today's radical social movements. It's disorienting to read a militant call to action in 2005. Much of the rhetoric and analysis would be more at home in a publication from the early anti-capitalist-globalization days of 2000, or even in times like '68 or '36. Note the scene of a masked figure aiming his slingshot at a line of riot cops that shines from within a smoking molotov cocktail.

In most of the radical circles I inhabit, militancy has fallen out of fashion as anarchists and others demonstrate a preference for working in issue-based coalitions, if not in neighborhood or workplace-based struggles. There is a world of reasons for this shift in praxis that has often led away from direct action and barricade combat, not all of them negative.

Whatever you're up to, odds are you'll react defensively to this missive's message. Then, if you're up for it, you'll question your commitment to

**Heartcheck**  
By Jeff Luers & Rob Thaxton, 2005



**JEFF "FREE" LUERS**, received a 22-year sentence for arson at an SUV dealership. He is incarcerated at a maximum security prison in Salem, Oregon. PHOTO: OSP LIFERS CLUB

revolutionary struggle and challenge yourself to walk the walk farther.

Luers highlights the SHAC7 (Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty) trial as an example to all anti-capitalists of the sheer monetary damage they inflicted on one brutal corporation with practical and exciting analysis. He suggests that the model be adopted not only to make profit difficult for egregiously inhumane corporations but also to disrupt the daily functions of international free-trade-enforcement organizations outside of their global summits. His call for a resurrection of the alliance between idealistic troublemakers and organized labor needs to be repeated everywhere from punk squats to union halls.

Similarly, los Ricos highlights the Kabylie Uprising in Algeria as an example of insurrectionary anar-

chist praxis today and the story was definitely news to me.

Is there a bit of prison-sharpened machismo in some of this writing? Yes. Is there also a sincere appeal to your deepest convictions? Absolutely. Read this zine and keep in mind where its authors are coming from. Imagine that you are a person who has given up everything to act on your convictions and as a result you spend every day in prison. You look out at the people and the social movements you had hoped to inspire, but you don't see the kind of action that would really help you get through the day. Free and los Ricos deserve at least our attention.

*Pick up a copy at Bluestockings, Vox Pop, Clovis Press or via email: freefreenow@mutualaid.org*



**BACK IN THE DAY:** Graf writer 'DEZ' far right, with crew in Spanish Harlem, 1982. *PHOTO: HENRY CHALFANT*

18-year old with mad flow?"

Today, most political rappers have understood Stephney's challenge and have aligned themselves with or created political movements. M-1 of dead prez was the former president of the New York City Chapter of International People's Democratic Uhuru Movement; Boots Riley of The Coup was a founder of the Young Comrades, while Mos Def and Talib Kweli continue working with Black August, a hip-hop concert series sponsored by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement.

But perhaps the power of hip-hop lies not only in political organizing but also in the ability to capture hearts and minds. Hip-hop was most real when it didn't have to take itself so seriously; when the idea of performance was intertwined with a political agenda. Groups like Public Enemy and Boogie Down Productions moved the crowd not only through music, but through visuals as well. Taking advantage of the new medium of video, they modeled the self-defense strategy of the Black Panthers and Malcolm X. I still remember my heart racing seeing KRS-One peering out a window, holding an Uzi, in veneration of Malcolm X on the cover of *My Philosophy*.

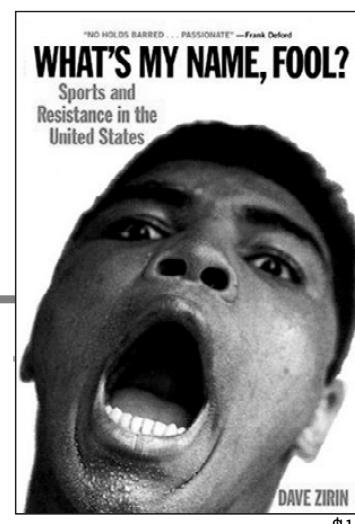
Back then, though, hip-hop was the play-

thing of street rebels and art students. Now it's a multibillion-dollar industry where image is everything. Voices of dissent are marginalized; Wild Pitch Records paid close to half a million dollars to suppress The Coup's *Genocide and Juice* album and dead prez have been declared persona non grata in almost all NYC nightclubs. The political mission of this hip-hop generation is twofold: power not only on the streets, but on the airwaves as well. Chang points to the work of the Third Eye Movement in the Bay Area over Prop 21, as well as the Hip-Hop Political Convention on the East Coast as examples of folks freeing minds, with asses following.

Still, will this generation fulfill its mission or betray it? In reading *Can't Stop*, Chang doesn't have the ultimate blueprint. As a music journalist he has written a beautiful, accessible map, but avoids the tough task of bringing it all together into a political statement. However, one wonders if it'll take a book to bring about a new chapter of hip-hop history or the very people reading this newspaper. Or, to paraphrase Mos Def: hip-hop isn't a giant in the mountain side, hip-hop is us.

*This review will appear in the forthcoming issue of Left-Turn Magazine.*

## Comic by Leo Garcia



This book brilliantly and beautifully makes the connection between sports, politics and resistance.

### ■ Chuck D., Public Enemy

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### ■ Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*

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